

ONLINE SEARCHABLE DATABASE

Registered charity or public safety organization information is available at www.michigan.gov/agcharitysearch. Search using one or more factors such as name, purpose, or geographic area, and obtain a report that provides contact information, the organization's purpose statement, and financial information, including assets, revenue, and its expenditures for fundraising, administration, and its charitable program.

PUBLIC SAFETY ORGANIZATIONS

While you are never discouraged from supporting a police, fire, or other public safety organization, here are some facts you should know before giving:

- Most public safety groups are not charitable organizations.
- Because these groups are not charitable, your donation may not be deductible on your income taxes.
- Police and fire organizations that solicit donations, and their fundraisers, must be registered with the Attorney General's office.
- Donations made to a public safety group are often used to fund that group's activities. Public services, like firefighting and police protection, are paid for by tax dollars, not donated funds.

IMPORTANT!! Public safety fundraisers are not the same thing as your local police or fire departments. Even if you say "no" to donating, your local law enforcement officers and firefighters will be there to protect you.

DEAR FRIENDS

Every year, generous Michigan citizens give millions of dollars to charities that do important and wonderful work in our communities. We can all do our part to help those charities accomplish their goals, whether it is feeding and clothing people in need, conducting medical research, supporting the arts and education, or one of a thousand other worthy programs.

As donors, you must decide among the many charities competing for donations. Unfortunately, not all charities operate with charitable intentions. Every year, my office hears of cases where an unscrupulous fundraiser or an illegal scam steers money away from real charitable causes.

As Michigan's Attorney General, I'm committed to helping citizens make wise choices. Michigan regulates and collects information on more than 6,700 charities. You can use that information to make the best choice to help your community.



Bill Schuette
Bill Schuette
Attorney General

DON'T LET A FEW BAD APPLES SOUR YOU ON GIVING.

Most charitable groups are committed to helping solve society's problems; they fill the gaps where government cannot meet all of a community's needs. The few mail and telephone solicitations that are scams must not discourage you from donating to charities. Learn the facts first, then please donate generously.

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO FILE A COMPLAINT PLEASE CONTACT US:

Department of Attorney General
Charitable Trust Section
PO Box 30214
Lansing, MI 48909
1-517-373-1152

www.michigan.gov/agcharities



Scan this code with your smartphone
for more information.

GIVING WISELY TO CHARITY



WISE GIVING

Some charities and public safety organizations employ fundraisers to solicit funds through telemarketing calls that interrupt your dinner and family time. These fundraisers are in the business for profit. They may even take a higher percentage of your donation than they reveal over the phone. You may be shocked to learn that, in some cases, less than 10 percent of your donation remains with the charity.

TO AVOID TELEMARKETING TRICKERY:

- Get the exact names of the charity and the fundraiser that is calling for the charity.
- Ask if the caller is being paid by a fundraising company.
- Ask if the charity and the fundraiser are in good standing with the Attorney General's office. Call the Charitable Trust Section to verify the answer, or check the Attorney General's website at www.michigan.gov/agcharities for a searchable list of registered charities.
- Find out where and how your donation will be used, and what percentage of donations goes directly to carry out the charitable purpose described by the solicitor.
- Ask if your contribution will be tax deductible.

NOTE:

Keep this list and a note pad by your phone to write down the answers to your questions.

CHARITIES Q & A

Q: Does the State require charities to register?

A: Under Michigan law, most charities that solicit donations are required to register with the Department of Attorney General.

Q: Are charities required to make their financial records public?

A: To register, the charity must submit financial information to the Attorney General's Charitable Trust Section. This information is available for public view.

Q: Does the law limit how much professional fundraisers can retain as payment for soliciting donations for a charity?

A: Fundraisers can retain any amount of solicited funds, as long as they abide by the contract with the charity. The US Supreme Court has ruled that states cannot regulate the amount fundraisers receive. However, the Supreme Court also ruled that they cannot mislead you about that amount.

Q: Are all donations to public safety groups, such as law enforcement or firefighter organizations, tax deductible?

A: Most public safety groups that are registered with the Attorney General's Charitable Trust Section are not charities. Therefore, donations may not be tax deductible.

Q: Is the solicitor who calls you the best source of information about a charity?

A: No. The solicitors are trained to get a donation. They may not know very much about the group they are calling for, and they may not be able to share information about how your money will be used. Their job may depend upon how many contributions they collect. Call the AG's office at 1-517-373-1152 with questions.

HERE ARE SOME WARNING SIGNS OF BOGUS CHARITIES:

- B**ills or invoices are sent to you even though you never pledged money to the organization.
- E**vasive, vague, or unresponsive answers to specific questions about the charity and how money is used.
- W**ords making up a charity's name that closely resemble a better-known charity.
- A**llowing no time to reconsider your pledge; they insist on collecting your donation immediately.
- R**efusing to answer questions about where your money will go or to send information about the charity.
- E**motional appeals and high-pressure tactics to get you to make a quick decision or feel guilty about not contributing.

BEFORE YOU WRITE THAT CHECK...

Demand information in writing from the public safety organization or charity, including financial information.

Contact the organization directly to verify where and how your money will be used. Do not rely on the solicitor's answers to your questions.

Visit the Attorney General's website at www.michigan.gov/agcharities to see if the organization is registered.

Call the Attorney General's Charitable Trust Section to check out the information. For charities call 1-517-373-1152; for police or fire organizations call 1-800-769-4515. (The toll free number is only for calls about public safety organizations.)

Check an
Organization's Status at
www.michigan.gov/agcharities

